Posts from Pastor John's Blog

Here you can find free notes, articles, book tips, ideas, Christian Reformed resources - mainly Calvinism (free & paid) and more, in order to help you grow in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The categories are:

1. Prayer & Prayerful
2. Bible Study Tips
3. Apologetics
4. Book Tips
5. Resources (Free & Helpful)

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May God bless you and keep you.

Pastor John

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1. Prayer & Prayerful

How can I get saved?

How can I get saved? What is salvation? Is there anything I can do to be saved? These are some of the questions people have, and often turn to various sources, in order to find an answer. Frequently, the Bible is not the first source people consult or even consider. The reasons for this may be many, yet none of them is profitable. Responding to and building on the first three questions the goal of this article is to explore what the Bible has to say and to help anyone who has struggled along the way to get the answers needed.

So, how can I get saved? It all begins with Jesus Christ. More specifically, with an understanding of who He is (His identity) and why He came (His mission). This is where the Bible comes in. Here we can learn about what we need to know about Him. With a good Bible translation – such as the NLT, ESV, NIV or NASB – we can find out what we are looking for. Here, a good starting point is the Gospel of John (aka. The Book of John). John was a friend and follower of Jesus and records for us the events, encounters and relationships with Jesus, revealing His mission and identity. In this way, we are able to get a factual account of Jesus' story, his life as teacher, miracle worker, prophet, his death on a cross and resurrection from the grave. Reading and understanding all about Jesus is essential, especially, the meaning of his crucifixion. This is the starting point in response to the initial questions set forth. So moving on the next question, what is salvation? – we must keep in mind that we cannot do this on our own, only Jesus can.

This part addresses the second question – what is salvation? Again, it all begins with Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is absolutely unique. As we find out in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was born of a virgin named Mary (Luke 1:35; Luke 2:7) conceived by the Holy Spirit, not of a man. Reading along the Gospel of John, we discover that Jesus Christ is also unique, due to His membership in the divine Trinity (John 1:1; John 1:29-34). In this latter segment we find out about the foundation of Jesus' identity and mission. He has two natures united in a single person for all eternity. Thereby, He is both fully God and fully human. The Trinity shows us that there is one God, existing as three eternal persons – the Father, Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. This is important to understand, since God is a God of divine love who welcomes us individually as people to enter into a personal relationship with Him. Jesus existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, before the universe and mankind. The Bible tells us in the creation account (which we find in the OT, the Old Testament – as it precedes the NT, the New Testament, containing the Gospels) that God created human beings (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 3:22). However, when our human ancestors, Adam and Eve, rebelled

against God by sinning – having been tempted by the devil – they lost their favorable standing with God (Genesis 3). This fall was a real event, resulting in the fallen state of the human race, and all people ever since are born spiritually dead, having inherited a sin nature.

So, people have been separated from God since then, yet God had a rescue plan in place. This rescue plan, required God to step in Himself out of love for people. In Jesus Christ (aka. “Jesus of Nazareth”) God Himself, the Creator of everything entered human history to rescue mankind. Jesus, thus is ‘God in the Flesh’ with a sinless nature, so that having this absolutely unique attribute, He is the only One able to save us. As ‘God-man,’ then, Jesus became and remains the single and only substitute who died for our sins (past, present and future). Hence, when Jesus died on the cross, having spoken His last words “It is finished” (John 19:30), He accomplished what we cannot do on our own. His resurrection confirmed that Holy God’s wrath had been satisfied in Jesus Christ (aka. ‘propitiation’). Salvation must be understood in the context of Jesus’ fully completed work on the cross. This work, we call ‘atonement,’ enables us as believers to have a restored fellowship with God. As such, Jesus redeemed us (freeing believers from sin) reaching its full expression at His Second Coming along with judgment day. Also, along with propitiation, Jesus reconciled us (Jesus bringing God and humanity together), resulting in salvation.

In short, through His death and resurrection, His ascension and later releasing the Person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus – and Jesus only – makes salvation possible, providing hope for fallen humanity. By His incarnation and divine nature Christ was and is the mediator between God and fallen humankind. He had to be both God and human to redeem His people. Jesus did it. This brings us to the last common question, if there is anything that a person can do to be saved?

So finally, people often ask: “Is there anything I can do to be saved?” No, there is not. Why not? Because Jesus did it all. He was the only One, who could accomplish this, since He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22). Other than Him, we are all born with a sin nature and are likewise (by default) eternally separated from God. There is nothing ‘good’ about us, nothing at all, that gives us anything to ‘make us right’ with perfectly Holy God. Apart from what Jesus did, left to our own ability, or doing any kind of ‘good deeds,’ there is nothing other than Jesus’ work on the cross that saves us (Ephesians 2:8-9). Left to our own devices, without Christ, we cannot get God to do anything or earn our salvation (Romans 3:20).

Thereby, understanding this, Jesus’ identity and completed mission on the cross on our behalf, all that remains for us is repenting of our sin. Repentance is agreeing with God, turning from sin and asking Jesus to help us. This is a change of heart, being genuinely sorry for our sin(s), renouncing of it, and a true commitment to leave it behind, walking in obedience to Christ. Repentance and faith (in Christ) must come together, as part of a single one-time conversion (through faith alone in Christ alone).

Jesus, as we see in the Bible, invites us to freely come to Him in repentance (Matthew 11:28-29). As you read on in John's Gospel, He is interested only in one thing, and that is a repentant heart. Some encouraging examples of this, are found in Jesus' conversations with Nicodemus, a Pharisee (John 3:1-21), an unnamed Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) and the healing of a man born blind (John 9:1-41). Once a person repents, he or she is saved eternally, sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), having entered a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (John 6:27). This relationship can only be established by God and is the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no mechanism, or ritual to invoke or impart the Holy Spirit (John 3:8). Salvation cannot be lost – once saved, always saved. Anything else is false, and not in the Bible. This is God's amazing grace and love for all people. However, the Bible also tells us that not all will accept Christ's free gift of salvation (John 17:9; Romans 9:27; Romans 11:7). This is a harsh reality, yet important to grasp. There are people who will deny Jesus as God in the Flesh and die in sin (John 3:16-21). Entering a personal relationship may also cause others to turn away from a believer in Christ (Luke 12:51-53; John 15:18-27) and there will be people who claim to be believers, but in reality are not (Matthew 7:21-23) – yet, they can be identified for what they are by their actions, not by what they say (Matthew 7:17).

Nevertheless, as we read about the Holy Spirit in John chapter 14, 15 and 16, as believers, we can ask Him to help us with whatever we are dealing with, and claim our identity in Christ (John 14:6; John 15:5). If we do sin, which we do at times, we are convicted by the Holy Spirit, who invites us to immediately confess our sin to Him, and He will help us (1 John 1:9). As true followers, we may have to surrender our lifestyles to Him, yet, with Jesus on our side, there is nothing He cannot handle. That is true freedom in Christ (John 8:36; Psalm 9:10). The truth is that God desires a personal relationship with Him more than we do (2 Peter 3:9) and there is nothing more desirable anyone can ask for, being eternally connected to Jesus Christ (Romans 8:38-39) both here and now, as well as for eternity.

To sum it up, it all begins with Jesus, learning about Him, His identity and mission, understanding the significance of His work on the cross – enabling salvation as a free gift, for every repentant person. This is a matter of the heart. A lifelong and eternal relationship with Jesus Christ is available to all, who freely decide to come to Him.

If you have read about and understand the free gift of salvation that Jesus offers, based on who He is and what He did, knowing and heartfully embracing that He is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6) you can turn to Him right now, not on the basis of anything else, but His fully finished work on the cross, by believing in Him (Hebrews 11:6) you can pray as follows:

Turning your life over to Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus,

I come to You as a broken sinner with a repentant heart.
My sins are many, and I have sinned against You.
I acknowledge that on my own, I cannot earn my salvation.
I believe that You came as ‘God in the Flesh’ to atone for all my sins.
You did this for me, by dying on the cross, rising three days later,
ascending to heaven and sending the Holy Spirit.
I come to You in humble submission, as Your child, Lord Jesus,
and embrace You as my personal Lord and Savior.
Amen.

- **What is Easter?**
  What is Easter? . . . Do you know the answer? . . . Let us start with what Easter is NOT about. . . . It is not about: a holidaya bunny rabbit easter eggsspending time with family and friendsa party . . . . . Okay…. So, what IS Easter about ……
  Bible & Bible-related, Devotional, Ideas & Thoughts, Prayer & Prayerful

- **How to pray & some prayer tips**
  How to pray & some prayer tips Here are some ideas on prayer and praying that may help you. So, first you want to make sure, you are in a quiet, undistracted place. Turn off all distractions (phones, mobile, TV, music, etc.). If you are in an environment that is not conducive to this –…

2. Bible Study Tips

- **How can I get started reading and studying the Bible?**

Often people ask, how they can get started reading and studying the Bible. For anyone reading the Bible for the first time the initial experience may be one of feeling overwhelmed, challenged or even at a loss. While such scenarios may be common, this need not be so. Admittedly, while the Bible is complex, due…

- **What is a good Bible translation?**
  People often ask what a good Bible translation is. This is an important question and should not be simply ignored or dismissed. While there exist many languages in the world (over six thousand), there are likewise many translations of the Bible in existence (about three thousand), with a major variety in English. Not all are…

- **What are other approaches to study the Bible? (Advanced Bible study)**
  The Bible is God's revealed testimony to mankind. Here we encounter His divine plan for all people who turn to Him for redemption through Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the cross. God's Word is a manifestation of His divine love and grace, as He reveals His heart and mind to human beings. He…

- **Essential Research Tools for the Whole Bible**
  Essential Research Tools for the Whole Bible (1) Five good Bible translations (KJV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, NIV). An analytical concordance, e.g. Young's concordance. New Bible Dictionary. New Dictionary of Biblical Theology. A Bible Atlas, e.g. The New Moody Atlas of the Bible (2009); Zondervan Atlas of the Bible by Rasmussen (rev. 2010). Geerhardus Vos's Biblical…

3. Apologetics

- **Does God exist? If so, how do we know?**

Often people ask, if God exists and if He does, how do we know? This is a very important question and must not be simply dismissed, or ignored. The short answer is, God not only exists, but He also is a personal God and has a name – Jesus Christ. While some people believe in…

Can I trust the Bible? Is the Bible reliable?
Some people ask, if they can trust the Bible and if it is reliable. These are two valid questions, and the short answer to both is yes. On this note, there are many false perceptions, common misperceptions and outright falsehoods that some people claim about the Bible (aka. Scripture). Nevertheless, while these perceptions exist, unfortunately, …

How did we get the Bible? How do we know the Bible is true?
People often ask how we got the Bible. This question is valid and not simple to answer. A short answer is not sufficient, yet one thing that can be said is that it involved several processes. Hereby, under the guidance of God Himself – thousands of people over a long period of time – under…

4. Book Tips

"What Is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics" by R.C. Sproul (Booktip)
"What Is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics" by R. C. Sproul . This is a helpful book, that explains the basics of Reformed theology. It is well-written, easy to understand and provides appropriate Bible passages to help explain (TULIP). It clears up many misunderstandings, and misperceptions about reformed theology, the Reformation and Calvinism. It also has…

- **Booktip: "A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life" by J. I. Packer**

  ….Booktip: "A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life" by J. I. Packer Hardcover. Crossway Publishers, 2022. 576 pages. I just finished reading this book and recommend it. What I liked best, is that this book helped me understand the Puritains better, and enabled me to overcome preconceived ideas and prejudices I…

- **Booktip: Ask Pastor John (John Piper) by Tony Reinke**
  Ask Pastor John – 750 Bible Answers to Life's Most Important Questionsby Tony Reinke. Crossway, 2024. 536 pages.. . . This is a helpful book that provides solid Bible-based and Christ-centered answers to many questions believers may have. It covers a range of topics, such as life issues, practical Christian living, help in overcoming addictions, the…

- **Two Book tips – Martyn Lloyd-Jones**
  Two Book tips – Martyn Lloyd-Jones Here are two book tips for you. The first book is by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, titled 'Preaching and Preachers' (40th Anniversary Edition), Zondervan, 2012, 352 pages. This is a helpful resource for all preachers and those who want to learn more about sermon preparation, development and delivery. With a…

- **Reasoning for the Truth of Christianity (Book Tip)**
  Reasoning for the Truth of Christianity: A Practical Guide to Apologetics in College and Life by Cameron J Grysen Product Details ISBN-13: 9781546723738Publisher: CreateSpace PublishingPublication date: 05/26/2017Pages: 232 About this book The purpose of this book is to reach out to young adult believers in Jesus Christ who are about to enter, or are already…

- **Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible (Book Tip)**
  The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bibleby Charles StanleyPublisher:Thomas Nelson, 2005ISBN: 9781418531218 OverviewLoved and respected by millions for his Bible teaching, Dr. Charles Stanley, "America's Pastor", has helped lead believers all over the world into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ, full of growth and maturity. The Charles Stanley Life Principles Bible takes the life-changing…

5. Resources (Free & Helpful)

- **Free Sermon Library of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**
  Free Sermon Library of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones . This is the complete audio preaching collection of sermons by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who preached over 1,600 sermons during his ministry at Westminster Chapel in London from 1939-1968. This is a Bible-based and Christ-centred resource you may enjoy very much. . Visit the Sermon Library of Dr.…
- **'Jesus Is' (Cards)**
  'Jesus Is' (Cards) – WHO IS JESUS? These cards are there to help you understand who Jesus Christ is. Jesus is both human and divine ('God in the Flesh'). Among Christians, there may be some, who when asked "Who is Jesus?" stumble in their response, because they are not sure what to say. Yes, they…
- **Bible Verse – Memory Cards**
  Bible Verses – Memory Cards How to Use the Weekly Scripture Memory Cards: Note: Jesus' words are italicized and in quotations The goal is to memorize one Scripture verse weekly to grow closer to our Lord Jesus Christ Contents:The Armor of God – a set that goes togetherThe Beatitudes – a set that goes together …
- **Berean Standard Bible (BSB) – Public domain – (free download) Amen.**
  The Berean Bible is a completely new English translation of the Holy Bible, effective for public reading, study, memorization, and evangelism. This is the full Berean Bible text, BSB study tools, Berean Reader's Bible, Berean Literal Bible NT, Berean Greek Bible NT, Berean Interlinear Bible NT. . . . The Berean Bible and Majority Bible texts are officially placed…

  Crucial Questions: 35 Free eBooks from R.C. Sproul (Free resource)
  Crucial Questions: 35 Free eBooks from R.C. Sproul . "To further help Christians know what they believe, why they believe it, how to live it, and how to share it, in May 2013 we made the ebook editions of R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions series free forever. We continue to publish new ebooks in this series and this…
- **Making Wise Decisions (God's Way) – with Dr. Charles Stanley**
  Making Wise Decisions – with Dr. Charles Stanley This a great message that will help you make wise and godly decisions on a daily basis,

following God’s lead. You can access this sermon message free here: Making Wise Decisions – Dr. Charles Stanley May this sermon be a blessing to you. Amen.

May God bless you and keep you.

Pastor John

Amen.